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Research chemists of the United States Mint have developed a "nickel-less nickel" that will save for defense use annually almost a million pounds each of vital nickel and copper, and at the same time will preserve the usefulness of the coin in mechanical devices.

Mrs. Nellie Tayloe Ross, Director of the Mint, told Secretary Morgenthau that the change-over can be made quickly, after Congressional approval, to a coin half silver and half copper, eliminating one-third of the copper and all the nickel now used.

Legislation to authorize the change was approved this week by a Senate judiciary committee.

Treasury officials pointed out that the materials vitally needed for defense are being replaced by a metal of which the nation has ample supply. Of the Government's total silver stock, more than a billion and a quarter ounces not currently put to monetary uses are available for this purpose. Only about 2 percent of this amount would be required annually for the proposed coins.

Mint officials contemplate no move to call in outstanding coins for melting down. They say that the technical difficulties are too great to warrant consideration of such salvage operations under present supply conditions of the metals involved.

The proposed new 5-cent piece would present no mechanical difficulties and would entail no necessity for change of design. The coins will present a bright, silvery color when newly struck, but the experts say they will gradually assume a yellowish appearance after circulation.

The samples are of the same weight and diameter as the 5-cent piece now in use, but are slightly thinner. The coin would function properly in such devices as subway turnstiles, telephone pay stations and countless merchandise vending machines.

Mrs. Ross also announced that the Bureau of the Mint expects to save 100,000 pounds of tin a year through a change, under present laws, in the content of the cent. In addition, 40,000 pounds of tin on hand are being turned over to defense industries.

The tin content of the one-cent piece has been reduced to a trace, without affecting materially the quality or appearance of the coin, she said. The new cent consists, for practical purposes, of 95 percent copper and 5 percent zinc; instead of 95 percent copper, 4 percent zinc, and 1 percent tin, as at present.

Mint chemists are making further experiments in an effort to save additional copper.

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